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What is claimed is:

1-17 (cancelled)

18. (currently amended) A monoclonal antibody having ~~an~~ a binding affinity of $>10^{8}M^{-1}$ for the amino acid sequence YPYDVPDYA[[,]] (SEQ ID NO: 1) as determined using a BIACORE® surface plasmon resonance system~~, wherein said monoclonal antibody is~~ and raised against ~~a 13 or 14 amino acid containing~~ an epitope of human influenza virus haemagglutinin consisting of 13 or 14 amino acids.

19. (currently amended) A monoclonal antibody having ~~an~~ a binding affinity of 10^{9}-$10^{10}M^{-1}$ for the amino acid sequence YPYDVPDYA, (SEQ ID NO: 1) as determined using a BIACORE® surface plasmon resonance system~~, wherein said monoclonal antibody is~~ and raised against ~~a 13 or 14 amino acid containing~~ an epitope of human influenza virus haemagglutinin consisting of 13 or 14 amino acids.

20. (currently amended) The monoclonal antibody of claim 18 or claim 19, wherein said antibody is produced by hybridomas which are obtained by fusing mouse ~~P3x63-Ag8.653~~ myeloma cells with B lymphocytes from Lou/C rats, said Lou/C rats having been immunized with a haemagglutinin peptide.

21. (currently amended) The monoclonal antibody of claim 18 or claim 19, wherein said antibody is produced by hybridomas which are obtained by fusing mouse ~~P3x63-Ag8.653~~ myeloma cells with B lymphocytes from Lou/C rats, said Lou/C rats having been immunized with a haemagglutinin peptide, wherein said immunization is carried out with a haemagglutinin peptide coupled to keyhole limpet haemocyanin.

22. (previously presented) The monoclonal antibody of claim 18 or claim 19, wherein said antibody is produced by hybridoma R 3A12 deposited at the "Deutsche Sammlung für Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen" under Accession No. DSM ACC2286 (08.10.1996).

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23. (currently amended) A method for the production of a monoclonal antibody ~~against~~ with binding specificity for the epitope YPYDVPDYA (SEQ ID NO: 1) comprising:

(a) synthesizing a haemagglutinin peptide consisting of 13 or 14 amino acids,

(b) immunizing a small mammal with said peptide,

(c) isolating B lymphocytes from the spleen of said mammal and fusing said lymphocytes with mouse ~~P3x63-Ag8.653~~ myeloma cells to form clones,

(d) selecting clones formed in step (c) that produce an antibody which binds to [[a]] the haemagglutinin peptide and to a haemagglutinin fusion protein, and

(e) selecting a clone from those selected in step (d) that produces an antibody with ~~an~~ a binding affinity of $>10^{8}M^{-1}$ for the sequence YPYDVPDYA (SEQ ID NO: 1) and establishing said clone as a hybrid cell line.

24. (previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein said haemagglutinin peptide is selected from the group consisting of acetyl-YPYDVPDYAGSGSK (ε-biotinoyl) amide (a derivative of SEQ ID NO: 2) and biotinoyl-ε-Aca-SGSGYPYDVPDYA amide (a derivative of SEQ ID NO: 3).

25. (previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein said haemagglutinin fusion protein is haemagglutinin-tagged glutathione-S-transferase.